ELLE®
AUGUST 2019

MILEY CYRUS
ON
POWER,
PARANOIA,
& SEX

MEGHAN McCAIN
IS HAVING
A BAD WEEK

THE DARK SIDE
OF
FALL
FASHION

WHERE DO DOCTORS DRAW THE LINE?

ELLE.COM

ON MILEY CYRUS: CARDIGAN, CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE. CHOKER, MESSIKA PARIS. HER OWN EARRINGS AND NECKLACES.
ON MEGHAN McCAIN: DRESS, MARINA RINALDI BY ROKSANDA, $1,975. STUD EARRINGS, LAGOS, $650. SANDALS, STUART WEITZMAN, $398.

Speaking Your Mind

Remember when Miley Cyrus told us she couldn't be tamed? She's as outspoken as ever these days, with a provocative new album, *She Is Miley Cyrus*, and a riveting *Black Mirror* role that interrogates her Hannah Montana pop persona. When you sit down with Cyrus, no topic is off-limits. In this issue, she talks frankly with Molly Lambert about marriage, sexuality, therapy, and climate change (page 103). After losing her home in the Woolsey fire last fall, Cyrus is reevaluating her priorities and focusing on the issues that are important to her, like reproductive rights. "Nature's female," she says. "When she's angry, don't fuck with her. That's the way that I feel women are like right now."

At first glance, Cyrus doesn't have much in common with Meghan McCain, who's literally making a living from her candor as a conservative cohost on *The View*. But both women have been uncensored in the public eye and have dealt with the blowback that comes with being opinionated while female. In perhaps the ultimate understatement, McCain tells Carrie Battan, "I feel like I'm controversial." In a conversation that touches on, among other things, her remarks on Rep. Ilhan Omar and her evolution on LGBTQ issues (page 90), what emerges is a woman whose many brushes with controversy haven't quelled her frankness. "I will be vocal," she promises, "and I will live in the moment, for better or worse."

We might be living in a golden age of the female straight shooter. The #MeToo and Time's Up movements, along with the ongoing struggle for reproductive rights, have pushed women to be more vocal about the injustices we're facing every day. It turns out that some of them we didn't even know about. Jennifer Tsai, MD, reports on the disturbing phenomenon of medical students performing pelvic exams on unconscious patients who may not have knowingly consented to the procedures. Her article (page 94) sheds light on a little-known issue in the hermetic world of medicine.

We love new voices here at ELLE, especially when it comes to fashion. One rising talent that I'm excited about is Jhoan "Sebastian" Grey, the winner of the latest season of *Project Runway* (page 22). Born in Colombia, he studied ballet throughout his formative years, and his designs were made to be in motion. And Alex Bossi (page 44) is a young designer from Boston who came by for a deskside (fashion-speak for "meeting") and bowled over our editors with upcycled wares that show off his hometown pride. Mark my words: You haven't heard the last of them.

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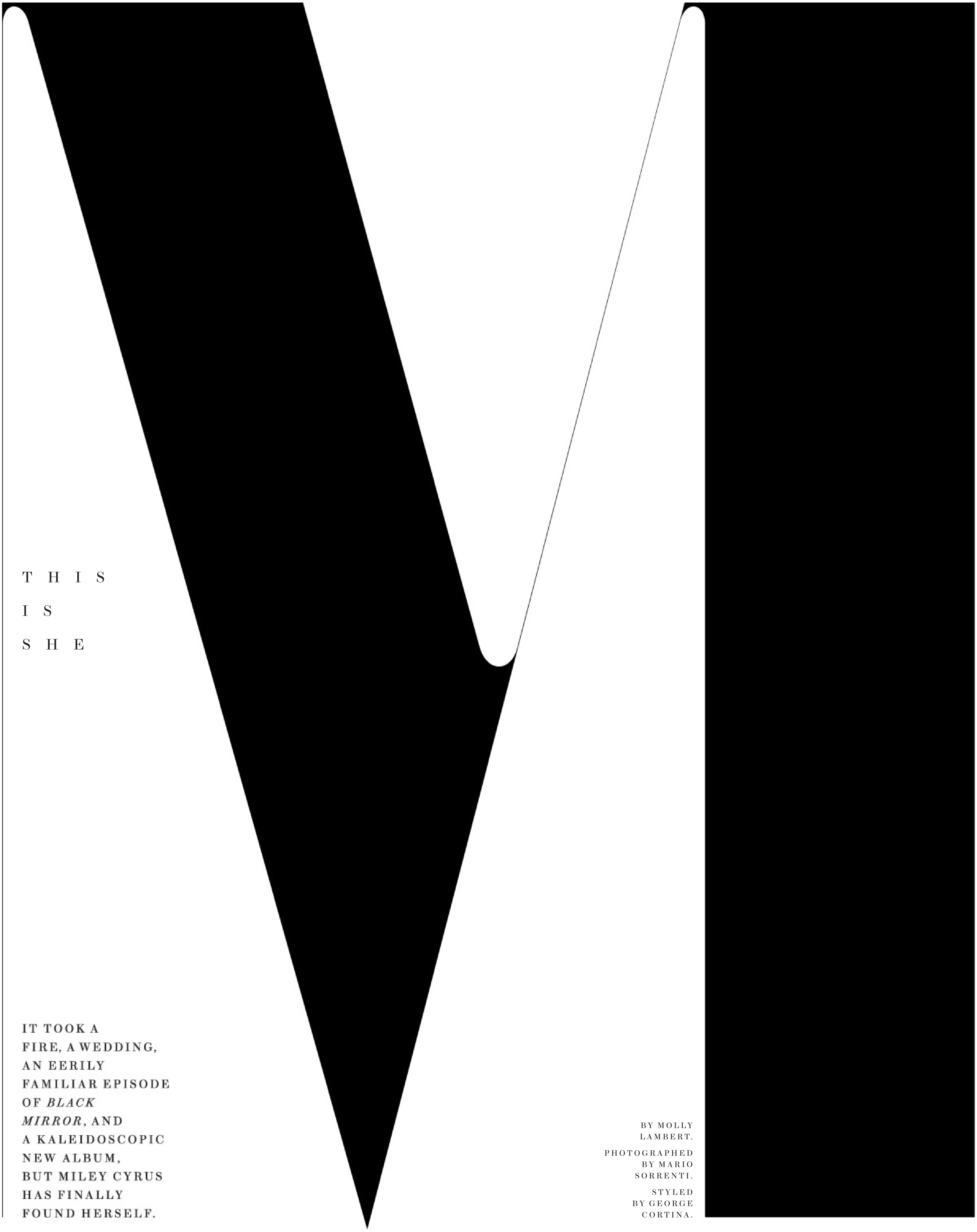
CYRUS: MARIO SORRENTI; McCAIN: CELESTE SLOMAN; FOR DETAILS, SEE SHOPPING GUIDE.



THIS IS SHE

IT TOOK A FIRE, A WEDDING, AN EERILY FAMILIAR EPISODE OF *BLACK MIRROR*, AND A KALEIDOSCOPIC NEW ALBUM, BUT MILEY CYRUS HAS FINALLY FOUND HERSELF.

BY MOLLY LAMBERT.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARIO SORRENTI.

STYLED BY GEORGE CORTINA.

Corset, Burberry, $4,190. Tights, Wolford, $49 (worn throughout). Choker, Messika Paris. Bracelets, Cartier, from $6,700. Bangles, Tiffany & Co., from $5,100. Ring, Vram, $12,850. Her own earrings, necklaces, and bracelets (all jewelry worn throughout).

Dress, The Attico, $2,521.

BEAUTY TIP
Make waves by applying L'Oréal Paris Advanced Hairstyle Curve It Elastic Curl Mousse ($5) to dry hair in small sections.

Cardigan,
Celine by
Hedi Slimane.
Rings, all,
Vram, from
$2,100.

[redacted]

MILEY CYRUS WANTS TO READ ME SOMETHING SHE WROTE. “I TRY TO MEDITATE THE NIGHT BEFORE INTERVIEWS ON WHAT MY GOAL IS, WHAT I WANT THIS TO SAY ABOUT ME.”

WE’RE IN THE LIVING ROOM OF THE HOUSE SHE BOUGHT AT 18, in the hills above the San Fernando Valley. At some point it became her office, but she and Liam Hemsworth moved back in after their Malibu home burned down in the Woolsey fire last November (the couple married a month later at her Tennessee farmhouse). On the walls are framed portraits of Elvis and Dolly Parton. There’s a view to the pool outside. Two of her dogs snuggle on the couch between us as Cyrus rests her notebook on her lap, clears her throat, and begins. “My record is called *She Is Miley Cyrus*. ‘She’ does not represent a gender. She is not just a woman. ‘She’ doesn’t refer to a vagina. She is a force of nature. She is power. She can be anything you want to be, therefore, she is everything. She is the super she. She is the she-ro. She is the She-E-O.”

Cyrus hops up and begins pacing as she explains that “she” is the most confident version of herself, and that “she/woman is taking back the power. She is here, fierce femme energy.” Her sermon turns current as she conveys how women are the reason for life, “which is a blessing and a curse.” She laments the expectation this puts on the female sex: “We’re expected to keep the planet populated. And when that isn’t a part of our plan or our purpose, there is so much judgment and anger that they try to make and change laws to force it upon you—even if you become pregnant in a violent situation. If you don’t want children, people feel sorry for you, like you’re a cold, heartless bitch who’s not capable of love.” Cyrus hates the word *selfish*. “Why are we trained that love means putting yourself second and those you love first? If you love yourself, then what? *You* come first.” Her serious face melts back into her characteristic sunny smile, and she plops down on the couch. “So that’s my spiel.” Eventually, we end up surrendering the sofa to her dogs and wind up cross-legged on a white shag rug on the floor.

In a new *Black Mirror* episode, Cyrus stars as fictional pop star Ashley O in a meta take on her former life as Disney star Hannah Montana. She’s also just released the first of three new EPs that together will form the aforementioned *She* album, her seventh full-length studio release. The music is genre-fluid and, like Cyrus, all over the place, but intentionally so. She has been thinking a lot about who *she* is, and has come to the conclusion that the answer is manifold. At 26, Cyrus is taking stock of the different phases of her very public life and considering how to use her platform to raise awareness about the issues she cares most about, like climate change, abortion rights, and housing inequality. At heart, she is an empath, and a vulnerable soul who wants to help protect other vulnerable souls.

ELLE: It sounds like you’ve also been thinking a lot about women’s bodily autonomy.

MILEY CYRUS: Yeah, too much. I’m such an overthinker. But at this time of my life, I feel the most powerful I’ve ever felt. I like the way being sexual makes me feel, but I’m never performing for men. They shouldn’t compliment themselves to think that the decisions I’m making in my career would have anything to do with them getting pleasure. I don’t think that because some guy thinks I’m hot he’s going to buy my record. It doesn’t help me.

ELLE: And then there’s the idea that if you’re a woman, your life is over when you get married.

MC: I think it’s very confusing to people that I’m married. But my relationship is unique. And I don’t know that I would ever publicly allow people in there because it’s so complex, and modern, and new that I don’t think we’re in a place where people would get it. I mean, do people really think that I’m at home in a fucking apron cooking dinner? I’m in a hetero relationship, but I still am very sexually attracted to women. People become vegetarian for health reasons, but bacon is still fucking good, and I know that. I made a partner decision. This is the person I feel has my back the most. I definitely don’t fit into a stereotypical wife role. I don’t even like that word.

ELLE: It seems like your parents have a good relationship. That helps.

MC: And they were always *partners*. That’s why I like that word. “Husband and wife” sounds like a cigarette commercial from the ’50s to me. I think about the song “Stand By Your Man” a lot, and how it was one of my mom’s favorites. Did she even realize what it’s saying? Like, he’s going to get drunk and cheat on you, and when he comes home, you stand by your man because at the end of the day, he loves you. He’s just a man. He just *had* to have sex so bad that he forgot about your feelings. I have a new song, “Never Be Me,” and the chorus says, “If you’re looking for faithful, that’ll never be me. If you’re looking for stable, that’ll never be me. If you’re looking for someone that’ll be all that you need, that’s never going to be me.” When I first played it for [producer] Mark Ronson, he was like, “You can’t say that. You have guy fans, and they’re not going to understand what you mean. I don’t even understand what you mean.” And I’m like, “But you wouldn’t say anything about it if a man came in and played that record.” And then two days later, he hit me up and he’s like, “You’re absolutely right. I totally get your perspective.”

ELLE: It scares men.

MC: Joan Jett told me about the first time she played “I Love Rock ’n’ Roll,” and Clive Davis said, “There’s no place in the industry for that. No one wants to see a girl with short hair and a guitar.”

ELLE: When straight men are in charge, so much of it is about, “Do I want to fuck this?” But it’s also, like, gay women want to fuck Joan Jett. A lot of people want to fuck Joan Jett. Maybe *you* don’t. I mean, *straight* women want to fuck Joan Jett.

MC: 100 percent.

ELLE: She’s like Mick Jagger.

MC: Now any time anyone tells me no, I’m like, “Well, honey, you know what? People told fucking Joan Jett that they didn’t want ‘I Love Rock ’n’ Roll.’ ” No one should have ever told me that story, because now that’s my clapback for everything.

ELLE: Men refuse to take no for an answer all the time, so the idea that you, as a powerful woman in the music industry, should have to because you’re a woman is crazy.

MC: The new music is definitely telling that story. And so is my *Black Mirror* episode. The character is me. They twisted it up the way they always do, but the industry is already pretty dark. And at times, I’ve definitely felt like Ashley O. I still do. Making this record, I felt like Ashley O at times.

ELLE: Did [*Black Mirror* creator and co-showrunner] Charlie Brooker come to you?

MC: Yeah. They gave me the script and were like, "Let us know if you're interested." And I read it and was like, "It's not even if I'm interested or not. It's just that no one else can play this because this is my life. Like, you just took my life."

ELLE: My dad and I just had lunch, and I was explaining "Old Town Road" to him.

MC: That record is the best of both worlds in the way that you get a song that just sounds amazing on the radio—it's glue, it brings people together. But it's a fucking political statement.

ELLE: It's such a watershed moment for country, obviously, and the fact that your dad, Billy Ray, was like, "I'm going to get on this song and legitimize it as country music."

MC: My dad doesn't like when anyone tells anyone no. He loves the underdog and has always been that way. He would rather do what's right and lose sometimes than cheat and win. And that's always been me, too. I'd rather fail than cheat. I have a new song called "Bad Karma," but there is no such thing as karma. There's just cause and effect. Otherwise Donald Trump wouldn't be president. I don't believe that everyone gets theirs.

ELLE: Right—it's confusing when bad people succeed.

MC: It's just cause and effect. If you have a lot of money and you did a lot of shady shit, you're going to win. That doesn't mean that at some point someone's not going to take you down. But I just don't believe that everyone gets what they deserve. I know a lot of amazing people through Happy Hippie [Cyrus's foundation that focuses on youth homelessness, the LGBTQ community, and other vulnerable populations] who live on the street—artists who are supertalented who've never gotten a break. I fucking know that karma isn't real.

ELLE: I'm from L.A., and we've always had a huge homelessness issue here. The fact that some people can walk past it every day and ignore it is insane to me.

MC: I grew up working at KTLA, on Sunset, where so many homeless people are. When I go back to my old stomping ground and see kids wearing Happy Hippie T-shirts, that makes me feel so much more proud than if I had seven Grammys sitting on the wall here. After the Woolsey fire, I thought about how we helped more than 120 families who lost their homes. We've served nearly 1,300 homeless kids in Hollywood every year since 2014. And last year, we helped 270 kids find housing and provided 32,000 meals. That won't burn down. That helped me become much more disconnected from things.

ELLE: Fires do put things in perspective.

MC: With natural disasters, you don't get a choice. You surrender.

ELLE: Nobody's more powerful than nature.

MC: Nothing. And nature's female. When she's angry, don't fuck with her. That's the way that I feel women are like right now. The earth is angry.

ELLE: We've been treating it badly.

MC: We've been doing the same thing to the earth that we do to women. We just take and take and expect it to keep producing. And it's exhausted. It can't produce. We're getting handed a piece-of-shit planet, and I refuse to hand that down to my child. Until I feel like my kid would live on an earth with fish in the water, I'm not bringing in another person to deal with that.

ELLE: I feel like that's what all millennials are dealing with right now.

MC: Yeah. We don't want to reproduce because we know that the earth can't handle it.

ELLE: Did you ever feel like you just wanted to break out of the Hannah Montana mold while you were doing the show?

MC: I did once I was 18 because it felt ridiculous. The minute I had sex, I was kind of like, I can't put the fucking wig on again. It got weird. It just felt like...

ELLE: You were grown up.

MC: I was grown up.

ELLE: And you were wearing the same outfit you'd been wearing since you were a kid.

MC: One time I went backstage at Disneyland, and Peter Pan was smoking a cigarette. And I was like, "That's me. That's the kind of dreams I'm crushing." That's how everyone felt with the bong video, but I'm not a Disney mascot. I'm a person.

ELLE: Do you think people don't think of you as a musician enough?

MC: I think now I actually have the respect that I want. When I walk into a room, people may think, "Okay, she gets her tits out." But they also think, "But she's got a fucking sick voice," and that's all I care about.

ELLE: That's obviously the Dolly legacy.

MC: Exactly. It's like, "Don't let this blond hair fool you. I'm the one signing my checks." She's a fucking brilliant businesswoman.

ELLE: The *Black Mirror* episode feels like an exorcism of Hannah Montana and everything to do with being a child star.

MC: Yeah, I feel like I'm just not ashamed of that anymore. It's pretty cool when you hear Cardi B was listening to Hannah Montana when she was in high school. That shit makes me happy.

ELLE: The episode does a good job, too, of saying that this music makes lonely, nerdy kids happy. And that any music that makes a lonely person feel less alone is serving a valuable purpose. It also presents a realistic view of how being famous is its own specific mental health challenge that nobody else can understand.

MC: I tried to go to therapy a few times. And they treated me like I was everyone else who sits on the couch. They'd be like, "Well, you probably feel paranoid because you're smoking weed." And it's like, "No, I feel paranoid because people are putting little drones in my backyard." One time I was naked on top of a fake horse when a drone showed up. And I'm like, Honestly, I couldn't have asked for a better time. At least I wasn't sitting there drinking coffee, being boring. But now I think it's kind of uninteresting for people to see me rebel.

ELLE: Yeah. Well, it's a very common early-twentysomething phase to be like, "I'm going to test my limits and try on a bunch of identities and see what I like."

MC: I guess that's what I'm still doing—trying on identities and seeing what fits. The fires forced me out of my comfort zone, to find a new place to call home, to say, "Listen, I have collected all this shit, all these years, but that doesn't make me who I am. That doesn't amount to *me*."■

"ONE TIME I WAS NAKED ON TOP OF A FAKE HORSE WHEN A DRONE SHOWED UP IN MY BACKYARD. NOW I THINK IT'S KIND OF UNINTERESTING FOR PEOPLE TO SEE ME REBEL."

[redacted]

Dress,
Marco de
Vincenzo.
Stylist's own
sandals.

Dress,
Gucci,
$9,800.

BEAUTY TIP
Grow thicker, longer lashes with Grande-LASH-MD Lash Enhancing Serum ($65).

Dress,
Richard
Quinn,
$2,032.

Miley's own vintage T-shirt.

Hair by Bob Recine for Rodin; makeup by James Kaliardos at Art + Commerce; manicure by Lisa Jachno for Dior; produced by Kyd Drake at North Six.

Dress, Versace, $14,975. For details, see Shopping Guide.